

**Testimony of Heidi Zandri**  
**Administrator of Brookside Home**  
**H.B. No. 7027 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE**  
**THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.**

Appropriations Subcommittee on Human Services Public Hearing, February 16, 2017  
*concerning*

Department of Social Services Budget- Residential Care Home Funding

Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, Senator Flexer, Senator Markley, Rep. Dillon and Members of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Human Services, my name is Heidi Zandri. I am the owner/administrator of Brookside Home in Danbury and a member of the Connecticut Association of Residential Care Homes.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding residential care home funding. The Governor's budget once again caps residential care home rates. Since 2010 our rates have been frozen meaning new costs associated with the residential care home have often not been reimbursed.

Residential care homes are not medical facilities but we provide housing to some of the most vulnerable citizens in Connecticut. In total residential care homes serve about 3,000 residents with about a 95% Census Level of which about 94% are state funded beds- limiting our ability to cost shift.

At my home in Danbury, we have 20 residents that suffer from mental illnesses. They cannot live alone and now have a family with us. We have been in business for 42 years and now are seriously considering selling due to another year of capped rates. I'd like everyone there to imagine the last 7 years of your life without an increase in pay when everything else in life goes up. Now try to imagine running a residential care home where 20 residents and multiple staff rely on you to provide them with the best care you can on a budget from 7 years ago. You cannot. You cannot give your staff a raise either. I have had staff with me over 17 years. Sometimes I don't understand why they stay with me except that they love this business and the residents they care for.

It would be nice if the Governor looked at the people who abuse the system and cut their financing. The ones who go to the emergency room every night for no reason. The ones staying at home collecting welfare and unemployment because you've made it easier to sit back and get a check than go out and get a job. I remember years ago Medicaid recipients had to pay a copay to see the doctor, go to the ED and for meds. That lasted about 2 months because people complained they couldn't afford it. Well guess what? We cannot afford another year with the same rate from 7 years ago. Many RCH's have closed over the years due to capped rates and new unnecessary regulations that force us out of business. It's time the state of CT saw us for what we are. The diamond in the rough that SAVES the state of CT tens if not hundreds of thousands of dollars every year by keeping this population safe and out of the hospital and nursing homes. There is only so much we can put up with before we say enough is enough and close. Hartford needs to be more in tune with what we do and not just group us with everyone and say, "Well cap them another year!"

CARCH understands the difficult decisions that need to be undertaken in this budget but would urge the committee to consider the impact of the budget on residential care homes, our employees and some of the most vulnerable in the state. Our industry cannot continue to progress without the full support of the state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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